

## ABSTRACT

A method for implanting a prosthetic spinal disc nucleus in an intervertebral disc nucleus space includes: (a) providing a disc nucleus implant instrument having a passageway for passing a prosthetic disc nucleus, and a dilator for dilating an opening in a disc annulus; (b) providing a prosthetic disc nucleus having a first configuration and a second configuration, where the first configuration presents a first cross-sectional size and said second configuration presents a second cross-sectional size, with the first cross-sectional size being larger than the second cross-sectional size; (c) making a hole in the annulus of a disc receiving the prosthetic disc nucleus, with the hole having an undilated size that is smaller than the first cross-sectional size of said prosthetic disc nucleus; (d) providing the prosthetic disc nucleus in its second configuration in the passageway of said disc nucleus implant instrument; (e) introducing the dilator of the disc nucleus implant instrument into the hole in the disc annulus while said hole is not fully dilated; (f) causing the dilator to dilate the hole in the disc annulus; (g) passing the prosthetic disc nucleus through the dilator and into the disc nucleus space while the disc annulus is dilated and the prosthetic disc nucleus is in its second configuration; (h) withdrawing the disc nucleus implant instrument and allowing the disc annulus to return to a size smaller than its dilated size; and (i) causing or allowing the prosthetic disc nucleus to assume its first configuration. The disc nucleus implant instrument may also include an activator for causing the dilator to dilate.